

interstate as highway patrol and sheriff's deputies close overpasses and hold people back in half-mile cordons. The President will not see them. The dutiful national press corps, with credentials issued by the White House, will be subjected to a similar fate, never meeting the folks who really live there. The motorcade will lock in its guests, ushering them to Owens College, where tuition has just been hiked by 9 percent. An invitation-only audience will await. The White House is staging photo ops and messages less than 6 weeks before Ohio's primary on March 2. But taxpayers and not the President's brimming campaign coffers are paying for Air Force One on this visit to the heartland in Ohio.

So let this message go forth. The President has the worst jobs record since the Great Depression and Herbert Hoover: 2.7 million Americans are jobless. In December, only 1,000 new net jobs were created nationwide. 300,000 Ohioans are out of work. Their unemployment benefits and health insurance are evaporating. College tuition across our State is skyrocketing. The average graduate ends up a debtor with \$17,000 in debt as they begin their careers. 1,300,000 Ohioans have lost their health insurance, nearly 80,000 more than when this President assumed office. Since 2001, another 167,000 of Ohio's manufacturing jobs have disappeared. High tech, ballyhooed to have been our salvation, has been on a precipitous decline with hardware and software jobs being outsourced to India and China.

America and Ohio are being emptied of our wealth-producing jobs. Our trade deficit is at record levels. In 2003, imports exceeded exports by \$484 billion. NAFTA has hurt us deeply. These are not just numbers. These are people. Each billion dollars in trade deficit costs us 20,000 jobs. Hoover in Canton is gone, as is Dixon Ticonderoga in Sandusky and Acuity Lighting in Vermillion which is closing; Campbell Soup in Sidney; GE in Bucyrus; Good-year Tire in Greenville; Honeywell in Elyria; International Paper in Cincinnati; Lucent Technology in Columbus; Mr. Coffee in Glenwillow; Philips Electronics in Ottawa; and now Electrolux just across the border in Michigan.

When the President visited our region on September 6, 2001, I respectfully handed him a letter on Air Force One inviting him and President Fox to travel with me to meet the thousands of workers in Ohio who were losing their jobs to NAFTA and their Mexican counterparts who are also sliding backwards. He never bothered to answer. I mentioned this to him at the White House Christmas party that year and asked him about a reply. He winked and joked, and this is a quote: "The letter must have gotten lost in the shuffle." He did not ask for another.

Is it any wonder the heartland fires are burning? The trade deficit is not mashed potatoes. Jobs lost to Mexico, China and India drag down our Nation's

economic growth by nearly a third and every year of the Bush presidency it has worsened. The President will speak in Wood County, Ohio's largest corn-producing county, and my hope is he will urge new ethanol and biodiesel production to offset rising petroleum imports from foreign countries. They equal 60 percent of what our Nation consumes, the highest ever.

As gas prices in northwest Ohio just topped \$1.65 per gallon and the per barrel cost of oil now at over \$35 per barrel, do we not want America to transition to energy independence? Since 50 cents of every farm dollar earned today is Federal subsidy, what a gigantic job-creating gift the President could give to Ohio and to America by helping launch us on energy independence.

Mr. Speaker, when the fires burn in the heartland, we know America will feel the heat.

Since 50 cents of every farm dollar earned today is federal subsidy, let's put it to work to remedy the nation's chief strategic vulnerability—reliance on imported crude, a key component of our trade deficit. Promoting bio-fuel independence would create vast numbers of new jobs here at home, far more than Mars exploration or the billions being spent for Iraq rebuilding.

Ohio is plagued by deficits due to the poor economy. Declining revenues have used the state to raise taxes—fuel taxes, sales taxes, cigarette taxes, property taxes. Whatever federal tax relief the Bush Administration might have envisioned has been eaten up by rising state taxes. Even with Mrs. Bush's Reading campaign, our local libraries suffered state cutbacks, had to close down services, and were forced to seek a local levy to sustain normal hours.

The public sector isn't the only pressure point either. Ohio bankruptcies broke a record with over 10,500 last year, and the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corp just announced a troubling \$11.2 billion deficit threatening the solvency of our nation's private retirement plans. This is serious indeed.

Each year of the Bush Presidency, his budgets have ballooned the federal deficit. 2003 goes down as the worst red ink in history!

The bipartisan Concord Coalition calls the Bush budgets the "most irresponsible" ever. Our national debt has now broken \$7 trillion, and we are adding \$2.03 billion to the debt each day. This poor management threatens the long-term solvency of Social Security and Medicare.

The International Monetary Fund has warned that these net financial obligations, heavily floated through borrowing from foreign countries, pose "significant risk for the U.S. and the world." The U.S. economy as a whole will end up paying 40 percent of its total earnings in a few years, to pay interest on this "unprecedented level of external debt for a large industrial country."

It doesn't have to be this way.

For 8 years, Congress and President Bill Clinton labored to balance annual budgets, on a track to pay down the long-term debt.

Now the President will come to Northern Ohio to talk about jobs and a \$120 million national new job training initiative. Irony since Ohio, due to abysmal Republican manage-

ment in Columbus, still has failed to obligate \$242 million in job training and transition funds for which I have voted, the second-most of any state in the nation. Ohio is under watch and being fined for poor performance in federal job training efforts. These dollars were meant to help unemployed workers gain a foothold in this economy. I hope that during his visit, this President will join me in my efforts to recapture these funds for Ohio's workers despite an inept State government. Ohio's workers could use his help.

In Ohio, we are grateful to be a battleground state in Election 2004. Ohioans seek good jobs with good wages; health and retirement benefits that can't be taken away; affordable education for youth; and prescription drugs under Medicare for seniors. We seek respect for veterans, in theatre and afterwards fiscal responsibility and energy independence.

Every citizen must ask the question in this Presidential election year: Am I, and America, better off now than we were four years ago?

When the fires burn in the heartland, we know America will feel the heat.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. NORTON addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

#### OREGON ISSUES AND THE PRESIDENT'S STATE OF THE UNION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. WU) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. WU. Mr. Speaker, the most important thing the President can tell Oregonians tonight is what he will do to improve our struggling economy. All Oregonians hope for an improved economy that creates new and high-wage jobs. But the President must not let his hopes and expectations for future economic growth blind him to the current plight of the thousands of Oregonians who are out of work today. The unemployment rate in Oregon is a shocking 7.2 percent. But this is not a naked statistic. This is people losing their homes, losing their health care, losing their ability to send their children to college and a better future.

I was on our solid light rail system recently and I met a gentleman who came up to me and said, "Congressman, I have two master's degrees and I have been working in high technology for almost 20 years. But I've been without work for 18 months and I've lost access to unemployment benefits." To show compassion for that man, Oregonians and Americans across this country, the President must and should call for an immediate extension of unemployment benefits. For unemployed Oregonians, it is these benefits that keep their kids in college and prevent the loss of a home, a car or vital access to health care.

Too many Oregonians know the heartbreak of a jobless economic recovery. To create new, high-paying jobs,